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A
SERMON
Preach'd to the
SOCIETIES
FOR

Reformation of Manners,

At St. MARY-LE-BOW,

ON

Monday, December the Thirty first, 1711.

K. Trimmell BY
CHARLES Lord Bishop of Norwich.

Published at their Request.

L O N D O N:
Printed for D. Midwinter, at the Three
Crowns in St. Paul's Church-yard. 1712.

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Eph. v. 11.

Have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness, but rather reprove them.

TH E Apostle wrote this Epistle to the Saints that were at *Ephesus*, who from among the Gentiles were turn'd unto Christ, by whom they were quickned after having been dead in Trespasses and Sins. And as they still lived amongst those whose ways they had left; there was Reason to fear, that what thro' their own Weakness and the Vigilance of their Adversary, they might be tempted to fall back by Degrees into all their old Corruptions again.

Upon this Account it was that the Apostle endeavoured to arm them against such a Revolt, and to establish them in that Liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. Be ye therefore, says he, followers of God as dear Children, and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us. But Fornication and all Uncleanness,

or Covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh Saints. Let no Man deceive you with vain Words, for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the Children of Disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes Darknes but now are ye Light in the Lord: walk as Children of Light. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of Darknes, but rather reprove them.

This might be, and no doubt was, very good Advice to new Converts encompassed with all their former Companions, who wou'd be perpetually tempting them to return to their old Friends, and their old Conversation: But can there be the same occasion to press this caution on those who have taken the name of Christ upon them from the beginning, and who live among Christians?

It is certain there ought not to be the same occasion for it; and I wish to God I cou'd say there was not: But sad Experience shews that it is far otherwise with us, and that a Christian Country is by no means a security against leading a very unchristian Life. There are, God be thanked, many good and pious Christians amongst us; and yet Iniquity does at the same time so much abound, that the Love of others is in great danger of waxing cold at least,
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if not of being extinguish'd. As formerly the Flesh lusted against the Spirit, and these were contrary the one to the other, even so they are now: not only in particular Persons within themselves, but among one another. While some are endeavouring to keep themselves, and those that belong to them within due bounds, others think it strange that they run not with them to the same excess of Riot, speaking Evil of them: and labour to throw down every thing that stands in their way, and wou'd give them any Restraint. In this state of things as much Christians as we are, we stand in great need of the Apostles Advice, *To have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of Darkness, but rather reprove them.*

In speaking to these Words I shall

I. *Consider what we are forbidden.*

II. *What we are required to do.*

I. I am to consider what we are forbidden to do. And here the Apostle tells us, we are to *have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of Darkness.* What he means by works of Darkness we may learn from the beginning of this Chapter, where he cautions against several things that shou'd not be so much as once named among Christians,

as becometh Saints; such as *Fornication* and all *Uncleanness*, of which we have a larger Catalogue in his Epistle to the *Galatians* under the Title of the Works of the Flesh: which in the Language of the New Testament signifies the same thing, Works of the Flesh, and of *Darkness*, being constantly opposed to the Works or Fruits of the Spirit, and of Light.

In a word, all plain and gross Immoralities, contrary to the Purity and Holiness of the Gospel, are included in those works of *Darkness* which we are to have no Fellowship with; not such only as respect the Flesh in the vulgar acceptation of it, beyond which the Apostle carries his List in the place above-mentioned: where *Idolatry*, *Witchcraft*, *Hatred*, *Variance*, *Emulation*, *Wrath*, *Strife*, *Seditions*, *Heresies*, *Envy*, *Murders*, *Drunkenness*, and such like are reckon'd amongst the Works of the Flesh, and are no doubt such things as we ought to have no Fellowship with. All these are accounted Works of *Darkness*, either as proceeding from *Blindness* and *Ignorance*, or as being contrary to the Light of God's Word, or as being commonly committed in the Dark, or as leading into utter *Darkness*.

Most of the Works of *Darkness* may very well be so called upon all these Accounts: But any of them are enough to shew how much

much Reason we have to have no Fellowship with them. For there can be no reason for our doing any thing even out of Ignorance, and for which we can plead no other excuse: especially when we cannot plead so much as that under the light of the Gospel. And surely I need not say much to convince any Man, that he is not to do, what he himself is ashamed of, what is plainly contrary to God's Word, and that which leads to utter Destruction. For all things of this kind are unfruitful, as the Apostle speaks here, and make Men liable to that Expostulation he uses to the *Romans*, when he says, *What Fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?*

There was so far from any Fruit to be expected from them, that the Apostle assures them *the end of those things was Death*. It is most certain then that we are not to do any of these things, and it is as certain that we are not to have Fellowship with those that do them; that is, we are not to be partakers with them in their evil Deeds, we are not to wish them God speed, we are not any way to encourage them, no not so much as by Connivance, when we have an opportunity to shew our Dislike and Detestation of them. *For there is no Fellowship between Light and Darknes, nor any Concord between Christ and Belial:* So that we cannot.

cannot maintain our Communion with Christ, if we hold it with those things that are contrary to him.

What is it then that we are to do when these Offences come in our Way? That we shall see under the next general Head; where we are to consider,

II. *What it is we are required to do.* The Apostle tells us we are to reprove them, *i. e.* to convince Men if possible of their Errors, to shew them the Folly and the Madness of the Way they are in, and the Danger that attends their continuing in it, and to use all adviseable Means to prevent their pursuing it.

All this does fairly come under the Duty of Reproving; which being an Office of as great Difficulty as it is of Use, I shall propose such Rules as occur to me for the more advantageous and effectual Discharge of it. And for the more orderly delivering of what I shall say, I will reduce what I have to offer upon this Head to the Consideration of these four things,

1. *The subject Matter of our Reproof;*
2. *The Season and Manner of reproofing;*
3. *The Persons who are to be reprov'd;*
4. *The Persons who are to reprove.*

I. *The*

1. *The subject Matter of our Reproof.* And this is to be what has been hinted already; every thing that comes under the Apostle's Character of a Work of Darkness or of the Flesh, whatever is plainly contrary to the Laws of the Gospel, and expressly excludes from the Kingdom of Heaven.

There are many things which one cannot say are perfectly agreeable to what ought to be the Conversation of a Christian, which yet are not of so black a Nature as to make it our indispensable Duty to reprove them. There seems to be a great Difference between not allowing our selves in many things, and our condemning them in others. We may see Reason to abridge our selves of several Liberties, which we cannot from thence immediately conclude it sinful for others to take: and considering the Niceness of discharging this Duty even upon the plainest Occasions, I think we should not clog it with any thing that did not stand upon a very sure Foundation.

There is, God knows, Work enough for us to do of this Kind, where there is no Dispute to be made; and one would not hazard the good Effect of that, by bearing too hard upon things that are not so plainly forbidden.

To give an Instance from among the things which the Apostle in this Chapter

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advises

advises the *Ephesians* against, such as that of *foolish Talking and Jesting*, the Evil of which it is not quite so easy to fix. We may not possibly know at this Time what the Apostle precisely meant by those two Expressions; and tho' in the lowest Sense of the Word they may be unbecoming the Gravity of a Christian, yet it may not presently be the Duty of another Christian to reprove them, at least not with any Severity.

Foolish Talking can never become any Man that carries Reason about him; but there is a great Latitude in that which may be looked on as foolish. But if by foolish is meant sinful, as implying either Filthiness or Profaneness, in like Manner as the Sins themselves are often call'd Folly; there can be no Doubt but Discourse of this Kind has enough of Malignity in it to deserve our Reproof: being that Sort of evil Communication which does above all other tend to corrupt good Manners; and we cannot shew our Regard to Religion and Virtue, if we do not express our Dislike of it.

The Apostle's Advice against *Jesting* is yet of more doubtful Importance, the Word in the Original * not * *isparagmalon* having been used before, so far as I have observed, in any ill Sense: And yet no Doubt there was something in that Conversation which the Apostle chose to describe by

by this Word unfuitable to the Christian Profession. But forasmuch as it may be hard to say when this Jestings is criminal, where things too sacred or too licentious are not made the Subject of it; we should be cautious how we reprove upon such Failures as these. The Christian Religion did no Doubt intend to give the Professors of it a becoming Gravity, but not to make them morose, or shut out any just Relief we may have from friendly and agreeable Society: And therefore how severe soever we may think it reasonable to be, in Regard of our own Conduct in these Cases, from a just Desire to keep on the safer Side; we ought to be cautious how we censure the Liberties of this Kind which other Men take.

The World will receive no great Hurt from these things of doubtful Importance, if the main Points of Religion and Virtue are secured; and considering how hard we find it to make our Reproofs take Place where they are the most to be justified, one would not choose to expose them to ill Treatment, by applying them in such Cases as left any Room to those that received them, to look upon them as the Effects only of particular Humour. A Zeal which is according to Knowledge, will direct us in the Practice of this Duty to fall upon such Conversation and Actions as are apparently sinful, such

as he that runs may read the Iniquity of them, such as notoriously disturb the Peace and good Order of the World, and bring Mischiefs upon it, such as fly in the Face of the Authority of God and Man, and shut out those that continue in them from all Hopes of Salvation.

This may suffice for our Direction as to the Subject Matter of our Reproof; let us proceed to consider,

2. *The proper Season and Manner of Reproving:* And in judging of a proper Season for the Discharge of this Office, Regard is to be had to the Nature of the Crimes we meet with. Such as Drunkenness and violent Anger, which deprive Men for the Time of the Use of their Reason, seem to leave no Room for Reproof in the Way of present Advice; it being lost Labour at least to give Counsel to those who have no Understanding, and often an Occasion of their falling into a yet more brutal Behaviour. These Offenders are to be left till the Disorder is over, and they are cool enough to reflect, and see their own Folly, and are in some Disposition to bear Animadversions upon them. Such a Delay as this is but reasonable, unless their present Disorders threaten immediate Mischief to themselves or others;

thers ; and then no Time should be lost in taking the most effectual Means to prevent an impending Disaster. But when we find Men in cool Blood profaning God's Name in an horrible Manner, or treating any thing that is really sacred with open Contempt ; such daring Sinners should be out of Hand and somewhat sharply rebuked ; their Faces should, if possible, be made ashamed ; that if not they themselves, at least others might fear.

Another proper Season for reproving those that have deserved it, is when their Hearts are softened by Sickness or any other Affliction ; when the Hand of God is upon them, and they begin to be sensible how much they have done to provoke his Wrath and Indignation against them ; then are we to be Workers together with God to bring them to a thorough Repentance and Change of their Course.

And the like Opportunities are we to take when God showers down his temporal Blessings on those who had more Reason to have expected his Rod. God's Dealing with them, and their Behaviour toward him, is to be set before them in the liveliest Colours we can possibly give them, that if there is any Generosity or Gratitude left, these Considerations may work mightily upon them, and give them a better and a
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sobrer Mind. They are to be shewn the Danger they are in of being more licentiously wicked, from any Prosperity that attends them; if the utmost Care is not taken to make the Goodness of God a Means of leading them to a speedy Repentance. And they should also be made to consider how much their future Sins will be aggravated, and their Damnation enhanced, if they should go on to offend against so great Forbearance and Mercy.

And upon what Occasion, or at what Season soever these Admonitions and Reproofs are apply'd, great Caution is to be observ'd in the Manner of doing it, that the good Effect of them may not be lost thro' any Failing in the Use of the Means. It is so tender a Point taken at the greatest Advantage, that while we want no Concern for attaining it, we cannot be too careful in the Management of it. A great Love to be sure must appear for those on whom we hope to prevail, free and clear of any private View we may have for our selves; and our Addresses to them must carry nothing but a great Regard to God and the Good of their Souls. This must be express'd in the mildest and the gentlest Manner that the Nature of their Faults will permit; in which if they should happen to be overtaken only, there can be no Doubt but that they are to be

be restored in the Spirit of Meekness, considering our selves, least we also be tempted.

But the Mouths of lewd and profane Talkers are to be stopp'd with greater Plainness and severer Reproof; and a Course of Impiety must be check'd in a more peremptory Way, and by harsher Restraints.

More Rules of this Kind will occur to us under the next Head, where we are to consider,

3. *The Persons who are to be reprov-
ed.* And these without Question are all they that deserve it. There is no one that can plead an Exemption from this general Discipline: but High and Low, Rich and Poor, one with another, must expect to come under it, as Relation or Opportunity put it in our Power, or make it our Duty to exercise it upon them. They who are directly under our Care are the immediate Objects of this Point of Discipline, which is to be extended further, as the Providence of God shall call us to use it. This is to be done with the more Caution, the more they who are any way above us want our Reproof: For great Care must always be taken to preserve their Authority in all other Respects; and they are not without the utmost Necessity to be render'd vile

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in the Sight of those who ought to have a Reverence for them.

This is to be particularly regarded in the Case of Magistrates and Ministers of the Gospel, upon whose Characters the good Order of the World, and the Furtherance of the Christian Religion, does so very much depend; who therefore should not lightly be treated as wanting a Concern for that, which by all the Ties in the World they are bound to promote. And this Care is so much the more necessary, as we should by all Means endeavour to avoid the Suspicion of being pragmatistical in the Discharge of this Duty.

Great Distinction should be also observed between the Sinners we have to deal with, that we may apply our selves the more suitably to them. The weak, the bashful, and the timorous Offenders should be treated accordingly, and not hastily be put to an open Shame, least by that Means we lose one of the greatest Holds we have upon the Passions of Men. As long as there is any Modesty left, there is good Hope of reclaiming them by a just Consideration of that; but if we too soon make them despair of preserving their Fame, they may be tempted to lay the Reins on their Necks, and give themselves up to their Passions and Lusts.

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But there is no Need of this Niceness in the Case of bold and daring Transgressors, who must be rebuked with all the Authority that can be called in upon them; that they may neither go on themselves in such a publick Defiance of all that is good, nor throw so many Occasions of falling in their Brethren's Way.

Let us then pass on to consider,

A. The Persons who are to reprove. And these likewise are in general all who have any Sense of God on their Minds, and are any way call'd by him to give Evidence of it: Tho' some are more immediately concern'd than others to bear their Testimony in this Case.

They to whom the Care and Government of others is particularly committed, do stand obliged by that Relation to provide as much as they can, that every one of those of whom they are to give an Account may be so well furnished unto every good Work, as to let them do it with Joy. It stands them instead so to watch over the Lives of those that are under them, that they may not hereafter be required at their Hands.

The Ministers of the Gospel especially are bound by their sacred Calling, and by the
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many solemn Promises they have made, to oppose the Works of Darkness, and to stop the Growth of Impiety by all the Means they are able to use. They are not only to *preach the Word, but to be instant in Season out of Season, to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long Suffering and Doctrine*; nothing terrified by the Adversaries of our most holy Faith, but continuing strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might. They are to lay open the Foulness and the Danger of Sin, and that not only in their publick Instructions, but they are also to use *private Admonitions and Exhortations, as well to the Sick as to the Whole, within their Cares as Need shall require and Occasion shall be given, so that there may if possible be no Room left among the People committed to their Charge either for Error in Religion or Viciousness in Life*. And where these Methods fail, the Assistance of those who have Authority in these Matters is to be call'd in; that such Sinners may be reclaimed by the Censures of the Church, and *their Souls may be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus*.

But forasmuch as thro' the great Numerousness of some Flocks, and the little Impressions that these spiritual Weapons make upon some of the Fold, many Offences either escape the Notice of the Shepherd, or are beyond his Correction; it is incumbent
upon

upon the Christian Magistrate to join in this Work: that they who cannot be wrought on by the Force of the Gospel, may be restrain'd at least by the Power of the Civil Sword.

They who are vicious, and seem resolv'd to be so, should be made sensible that the Magistrate beareth not the Sword in vain, but that he is the Minister of God, a Revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doth Evil. And they who have Authority in these Cases are to look on themselves as called by the Providence of God to be Stewards and Watchmen, and to give an Account of those that are under them, in like Manner as the Gospel Ministers are.

They cannot but know that they are the Disorders to which Men are subject when left to themselves, that make Government necessary; and it is as plain for them to see that the preventing those Disorders in some good Measure at least, is the only thing that makes Government useful; and under the Sense of this, they cannot but think themselves obliged to do what they can to answer those good Ends for which they were rais'd above the rest of their Brethren.

The State and Pomp with which they are justly attended, is with no other View, but that it may raise a greater reverence of them in those that behold it, and make it

easier for them to keep Order and Peace among those that are subject unto them. But what Order or Peace can ever be hoped for, if the Wicked and Profligate, who are its constant disturbers, are not by the due application of their Power restrain'd, and hindred from running into those extravagancies to which they are by their Passions so strongly inclined?

not In what this due application of their Power consists, I shall take upon me to say, The experience they have in the Affairs of their Office, and that which they cannot but see of the ways of the Wicked, with that Desire which I trust they have to mend as much as may be the state of the World; cannot fail of suggesting to them the properest Methods for attaining this End.

But as it was observed in the case of the Ministers of the Gospel before, so in the case of these Ministers of God it must be also allowed, that they cannot have their Eyes in every Place, many things must escape them, if they have not Light and Assistance from others: And tho' they may have long Hands, they cannot reach of themselves to every Case that requires their help.

This makes it the Duty of all other Christians in general to assist as they have opportunity

opportunity, in so useful a Work. We are *in any wise to reprove our Brother, and not suffer Sin upon him.* We are all of us to be workers together with God for the benefit of Men. And while that is the only thing we pursue, the best, if not the greatest part of Mankind, will support and applaud our honest Endeavours to do good to our Brethren; and save them from that ruin, into which they are running too fast to be stopp'd, without great resolution in those that take this trouble upon them.

They have, God be thanked, made some progress in this noble and Christian Course; some Check has been given by these and other excellent Spirits to the growth of Vice and Irreligion amongst us. There is not so much Profaneness and Lewdness found in our Streets as has formerly been. This great Evil is at least more conceal'd than it was, and one wou'd hope from thence that it is somewhat abated. But there is still, God knows but too great occasion for continuing all this Vigilance and Care; and they who have gone the farthest in stemming this Torrent, find, I fear, that there still remains a great deal to do.

Neither the War we have been so long engaged in, nor the many Successes it has pleased God to give us, have had as yet their proper effect.: We have not been duly humbled.

humbled under the one, nor express'd our thanks for the other by a cheerful Obedience: but our Provocations have daily gone on both under the Judgments and Mercies of God, and make us very unable to say in what manner he is likely for the future to deal with us.

How much then do we owe to those who by their Endeavours to lessen the crying Sins of this Nation, are doing what they can to fit us, for the Blessings of God? and how ought we to wish them success in that hard Task they have taken upon them?

They who have labour'd in it so long, know much better than I can inform them what difficulties they have met with already; as well as what they have still to expect; and will therefore, I am verily perswaded, provide against them with all the Caution that is in their Power. They know that all the Rules of reprov'g that have been mention'd above, with many more that might have been named, are strictly to be observ'd by them in every step that they take: And so much the rather as they have less outward Authority in that which they do. For this Reason they cannot be too tender in preserving that Interest which our common Christianity gives them, by avoiding every thing that may cast a blemish upon their pious Design.

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No Man, whether Magistrate or Minister, can rebuke with half his Authority, if he suffers himself to fall into any of those faults which he is to correct : But he that is neither one nor the other, can rebuke with no Authority at all, if he does not keep his own Conduct free from Rebuke. And they who do so have this to encourage them under all the opposition they find, that a blameless Life will in the Course of it give them more Power with others, than any outward Relation alone can ever secure.

With this Armour then of Light upon you go on and prevail, and let the Prayers of all good Christians attend you, that God would prosper the Work of your Hands upon you, that God wou'd prosper your Handy-work.

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his Glory with exceeding Joy ; To the only wise God our Saviour, be Glory and Majesty, Dominion and Power, now and ever. Amen.

FINIS.

Books Printed for Daniel Midwinter.

A Sermon preach'd at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, before the Sons of the Clergy, on Tuesday the 2d of December, 1707, being the Day of their annual Feast.

A Sermon preach'd before the honourable House of Commons, at the Church of St. Margaret Westminster, on Wednesday Jan. 14, 1707-8, being a Day for a General Fast, &c.

A Sermon preach'd before the House of Lords at the Abbey Church in Westminster, on Thursday Feb. 17, 1708, being a Day for a publick Thanksgiving, &c.

A Sermon preach'd before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor and the Honourable Court of Aldermen, with the Governors of the several Hospitals of the City of London; in the Parish Church of St. Bridget, on Monday in Easter-Week, 1710.

A Sermon preach'd in the Chappel at Tunbridge-Wells upon Sunday the 19th of August, 1711, being a Day of Collection for the Minister. All five written by the Bishop of Norwich.

